

**CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF PETITION**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 2073.3 of the Fish and Game Code, the California Fish and Game Commission, on April 8, 2003, received a petition from Mr. Jeff Miller, Center for Biological Diversity, to list the western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) as an endangered species or threatened species. The western burrowing owl is a small ground-nesting bird of prairie and grassland habitats. Burrowing owls rely upon burrows dug by burrowing mammals for nests; and require open fields with adequate food supply for foraging habitat, low vegetation cover to allow owls to watch for predators, and adequate roosting sites. Burrowing owls in California historically ranged throughout the Central Valley, were found in suitable habitat in coastal areas from Marin County south to the Mexican border, and sparsely inhabited desert areas in the northeastern and southeastern portions of the state. A comprehensive statewide survey conducted in the early 1990s revealed that breeding owls were entirely eliminated from 5 counties and were nearing extirpation in 6 other counties. The statewide number of owls is currently thought to be declining at about 8 percent per year. California's remaining burrowing owls are threatened primarily by conversion of agricultural lands to urban development, persecution of ground squirrels and other burrowing rodents, and intensive agricultural practices. An estimated 91 percent of all owls remaining in California occur on private land, most of it under enormous development pressure. State and federal regulatory mechanisms have proved unsuccessful in protecting the burrowing owl and its habitat.

Pursuant to Section 2073 of the Fish and Game Code, on April 16, 2003, the Commission transmitted the petition to the Department of Fish and Game for review pursuant to Section 2073.5 of said code. The Department's evaluation and recommendation relating to the petition will be received by the Commission at its October 2, 2003 meeting in Redding, California. Interested parties may contact Ms. Sandra Morey, Chief, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, Department of Fish and Game, at telephone (916) 653-4875 for information on the petition or to submit information to the Department relating to the petitioned species.

April 22, 2003

Fish and Game Commission

Robert R. Treanor
Executive Director